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INFO RUEHXK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 000915

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD
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NSC FOR ABRAMS
CMC WASHINGTON DC FOR POLAD

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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (5/30): WHO WILL BE THE NEXT US PRESIDENT?

Main Stories:

Internal Israeli politics and the uncertainty of Israeli Premier Olmert's political future top coverage in all dailies. Al-Quds and Al-Ayyam lead with reports that Israeli political parties have already begun discussions about early elections. Al-Hayat Al-Jadida quotes Israeli Foreign Minister Livni calling on her party, Kadima, to prepare for elections. Washington's reaction also receives front-page coverage in Al-Quds and Al-Ayyam, quoting White House spokesperson Dana Perino as "acknowledging" that Olmert's political troubles could distract attention away from achieving a peace agreement by the end of the year. Al-Quds also cites an Israeli daily story by Yediot Achronot that reports that Secretary Rice may cancel her upcoming trip to the region because of the Israeli political crisis.

Al-Ayyam front-pages a report quoting unnamed Palestinian officials confirming that negotiations with Israel will continue despite Israeli political turmoil. The report adds that, Palestinian President Abbas may meet with Israeli Premier Olmert "soon" despite Palestinian misgivings about the future of Olmert's government.

The visit by South African nobel peace laureate Desmond Tutu to the Gaza Strip receives front-page coverage in all dailies. The papers quote Tutu condemning the Israeli "siege" on Gaza and the international community's "silence" on the situation of Palestinians in Gaza.

Palestinian Prime Minister Fayyad's remarks commemorating "Palestinian Justice Day" is highlighted by Al-Ayyam, quoting Fayyad stating that the rule of law and building government institutions

are top priorities of his government.

Al-Quds quotes Nasr Yusif, Fatah's Central Committee member, announcing that preparations for Fatah's sixth general congress will begin in a few days in Amman.

BLOCK QUOTES:

Independent Al-Quds carries its daily editorial entitled, "Truce or No Truce... That is the Question!" (5/30): "We continue to receive contradictory reports about negotiations between the Hamas movement and Israel, currently underway through Egyptian mediation... An objective evaluation of the negotiations concludes that the Israeli Government does not want to and probably cannot reach a positive conclusion to these talks because of the [Israeli] President's political weakness. This is the Hamas leadership's firm belief as revealed in their statements despite Egyptian restraint not to make any pessimistic statements [about the progress of] negotiations... Hamas has made compromises regarding its original position and has accepted that the truce will only include the Gaza Strip, not the West Bank. According to media reports, Hamas also accepted that the [Gaza/Egypt] Rafah border crossing will not be opened until a trial period has passed."

¶2. Independent daily Al-Ayyam runs an op-ed by veteran columnist Mohammed Yaghi, "Palestinian Preparations for What Comes After Bush" (5/30): "This is not the time for achieving a breakthrough in Palestinian-Israeli negotiations since Olmert is either on his way to court or on his way back home. President Bush will also leave

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the White House soon for his ranch in Texas. Moreover, Israel is now more occupied by attempts to alienate, through Turkish mediation, Syria from Tehran and thus isolate Hamas and Hezbollah... both parties of the Palestinian conflict must accept that Bush and his politics in the region are ending, if they haven't ended already. And if I may take a wild guess, the new American president will not be John McCain, the Republican candidate, because the American street wants to be rid of Bush's policies... It seems that the Democrat Barak Obama will be the new American President... who wrote in "Foreign Affairs" magazine, July-August issue 2007 that his priority in the Middle East will be to withdraw from Iraq and bring the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to an end through the establishment of a Palestinian state beside Israel..."

WALLES